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CONCLUDING REMARKS OF PRESIDING OFFICER

JOHN PURROY MITCHEL

There were two principles laid down by Mr. Erickson in the very interesting and instructive paper that he has just read to us, which particularly impressed themselves upon me. The first was that the field of the body regulating a public utility should be as broad as the field in which that utility operates; and the second, that a public utility ought to be operated either by a state or local body in accordance with which could do it best. Now, it struck me that if Mr. Erickson were to decide that question in New York according to those two principles, we would find Mr. Erickson on the side of home rule regulation there; first, because most of the utilities as to which we feel the necessity for regulation are coterminous in their field of operation with the greater city, and secondly, because we are devoted in New York to the principle of home rule. We have an abiding faith and conviction that we can govern ourselves a great deal better than anybody else can govern us. And so I was very much interested in hearing Mr. Erickson lay down those two principles.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the discussion of the evening is closed. You have heard a good deal of sound doctrine. To me, sitting here on the platform, it has seemed that perhaps a preponderance of the opinion expressed here by the speakers lay on the side of a material and effective measure of local regulation; but, fortunately perhaps for your comfort and possibly also for my confidence in my own opinion, you will not be asked to take a vote on that subject this evening. It is hardly to be expected that this important question will be settled as a result of this series of conferences, but that this discussion has been held at a time when this matter is a live issue in the cities as it is in New York, where we are going up to the state convention this year to ask a material and effective measure of genuine and practical home rule, certainly ought to put us further on the way to a logical, reasonable settlement of this question for our cities.

But whether we settle that question or not, it seems to me that there is a practical result that ought to follow from these confer-

ences. As our civic consciousness in the cities is developed, and our understanding of our own problems, we have come to see that those problems are not local or peculiar to particular cities, but are typical and common to all the cities. It was for that reason that in the call issued by Mayor Blankenburg and his colleagues attention was called to the fact that it might be possible in these conferences to develop a common basis of coöperation on the part of the cities in securing fair rates from public service corporations. Now, if out of these conferences there grows a more sympathetic understanding, a better feeling, more effective coöperation, a practical basis for the establishment of the machinery of coöperation by the cities, the same kind of effective and practical coöperation that most of us feel exists today among the public service corporations, then, I say, if that can be accomplished as a result of this series of conferences, the people of our cities can feel that a practical and valuable result has been achieved for them.